

Partner with the Madison Parks Foundation

By Chad Bartell

Madison is blessed with more than 300 city parks, open spaces and conservation lands. Our exceptional park system is one of the quality of life factors that lands Madison on Most Livable Cities lists year after year.

The excellence of Madison's parks is no accident. Nor is it merely the result of the hard work of the City of Madison's highly dedicated Parks Division. Truth is, Madison's parks have been shaped in no small part by the extraordinary efforts of ordinary Madisonians who saw ways to make improvements and got to work marshalling neighborhood energy and support.

The Madison Parks Foundation was organized in 2002 as a successor to the Madison Parks & Pleasure Drive Association for the purpose of partnering with such civic-minded individuals and groups. The Foundation acts as their tax-exempt repository for funds raised for the purpose of financing specific park improvements. This allows them to solicit tax deductible contributions from friends and neighbors, earmark them for a specific improvement project, and avoid the bookkeeping and tax reporting associated with obtaining separate tax-exempt status for the project. Partnering with the Parks Foundation is a great way to get something done in your local park.

If you have an idea about a way to improve your local park, and are ready to make it a reality, contact the Madison Parks Division at 266-4700 to discuss your idea. Parks Division staff will work with you to help develop your concept, finalize the design, put together a preliminary budget and secure initial approval for the project to enable it to proceed. Parks Division staff can also help determine if matching funds are available. Depending on the scope of your project, the Parks Commission may also need to give approval.

Once you have received the necessary approvals, you can enroll your project with the Madison Parks Foundation. The Foundation's 501(c)(3) status permits you to raise money while the Foundation handles the paperwork. In addition, the Foundation can help you establish a presence for your project on the web by posting a summary of your project on its webpage. The Foundation can even handle online credit card contributions for your project through its "PayPal" payment button, which you can arrange to have embedded in your project's website.

In addition to partnering with individuals and groups interested in making a difference in their local parks, the Foundation provides in-kind and financial support to various out-door oriented charitable events. Recently, the Foundation teamed up with the Madison Mallards Baseball Team and the City of Madison Parks Division to host the second annual 'Remarkable Rubber Ducky River Race' at Tenney Park on the Yahara River – a race of hundreds of rubber duckies down the Yahara River – with all proceeds benefiting the Goodman Pool scholarship fund.

Another noteworthy collaboration is the Foundation's sponsorship of the "Ride the Drive" events on June 6 and August 24, where citizens leave their cars behind to experience some of Madison's most scenic byways a whole new way - by riding, walking, skating, or strolling along some of our city's most beautiful streets.

If you would like to support these and other Foundation efforts, or simply would like to learn more about the Foundation, please visit the Foundation's website at www.madisonparksfoundation.org.